

CONGRESSIONALLY MANDATED EXTENSION EVALUATION

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The Food and Agriculture Act of 1977 mandated an “evaluation of the economic and social consequences” of programs of both SEA-Extension and the State Cooperative Extension Services. The mandate specifically includes programs relating to agricultural production and distribution, home economics, nutrition education (including the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program), community development, and 4-H youth. The secretary of agriculture is to report to the Congress the results of such an evaluation no later than March 31, 1979.

To provide guidance for such an evaluation, a policy group representing USDA, OMB, and Cooperative Extension Services was convened. To pursue the evaluation, a design team was selected by the policy group to plan the effort, a core staff is being assembled to spend full time in conducting it, and a contact person for each Cooperative Extension Service is being designated by that state extension director. Contact persons are expected to facilitate both provision of inputs to the evaluation project and communication with states.

Each State Cooperative Extension Service will participate in the evaluation by providing information, as well as reviewing material. In addition, some states are providing personnel for the evaluation, either as additional core staff or to undertake portions of the evaluation.

The evaluation project staff has identified a number of questions to help focus on critical issues and program consequences.

Questions Related to Clientele, Program Objectives and Problems:

- How responsive and effective has Extension been in identi-

fying and serving new clientele and in providing new programs in response to new social and economic problems and priorities?

- To what extent have traditional clientele and programs been phased out as objectives have been fulfilled or have become less urgent? Do established programs limit the ability to expand into new programs?

- What factors limit shifts in program objectives and clientele served as problems and priorities change?

- What factors or criteria would be useful in deciding upon desired future programs including clientele and objectives? What factors or criteria are used and who decides (or has decided in the past) upon clientele and objectives?

- How does Extension determine its priorities? How broad based is participation with Extension decision makers in determining these priorities?

- To what extent have Extension programs been responsive to national problems and objectives?

- To what extent have Extension programs been responsive to state and local problems and objectives?

- To what extent have local problems been carried to the state level for design of state programs?

- To what extent have local and state problems been carried to the national level for consideration in designing national programs?

- What are the strengths and the limitations of the current Extension decisionmaking system, especially with regard to its ability to respond to national problems and objectives? What impact does the federal government have on state and local budget and programs?

- What are the strengths and the limitations of the current Extension decisionmaking system, especially with regard to its ability to respond to state and local problems and objectives?

- To what extent are “disadvantaged” groups served in comparison to those in higher socio-economic strata?

- To what extent does Extension reach clientele in urban or suburban as opposed to rural (farm and non-farm) clientele?

Questions Related to Extension’s Relationship and Response to Other Organizations and Institutions:

- What implications do alternative private and public sources of similar services have for Extension activities? How has Extension adapted to the existence of these alternatives?

- Where does Extension get its research or knowledge base? How effectively has it transmitted new research findings to clientele? Has it served as an effective feedback mechanism to researchers?

- How effectively would research results be transferred without an Extension system? What are the values attributed to research which may not have been transferred?
- How and to what extent does Extension support or relate to action agencies of the USDA and other federal, state and local governmental agencies regarding similar clientele, similar objectives or similar or complementary roles? What factors determine (facilitate or limit) Extension's role in relation to other agencies' objectives or roles?

Questions Related to Educational Methodology and Techniques:

- To what extent does Extension rely on "one to one" approaches? How effective are these and what alternatives are there to present "one to one" arrangements?
- What are the alternative communication and educational techniques that can be used in Extension programming? How effectively are they used?
- What is the significance of local, district or state location of staff and resources in meeting program objectives and serving clientele? What is the significance of specialization in Extension toward meeting program objectives and serving clientele?

The evaluation staff will attempt to develop materials to provide information for dealing with these issues.

PART V

Other Policy Issues

